

Cotonou, Bénin, 12-14 November 2013

WEST AFRICA REGIONAL WORKSHOP
TOWARDS TOTAL SUSTAINABLE SANITATION

Using Social Marketing to Accelerate CLTS in Liberia

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Background:

The rate of uptake of CLTS has not been as fast in Liberia as in other countries in the sub-region. With the support of USAID in partnership with the Government of Liberia, the IWASH project, implemented by PSI and Global Communities (The Team), has identified social marketing as an approach that can accelerate the uptake and success of CLTS. The Team applied PSI's marketing techniques to develop an overarching demand creation strategy, to improve targeting, and to brand the Natural Leaders Network.

Methodology

PSI's uses its DELTA marketing planning process to optimize insights about consumers and service providers that emerge through market research to inform the design of social marketing programs and to turn evidence into action. The outputs of the process were the development of audience profiles, key messages in the form of a positioning statement for the desired behaviors, marketing objectives, brand execution elements, and an M&E plan to monitor implementation of the strategies and changes in consumer behavior. The Team identified the following behaviors to focus on: 1) Generating interest in "clean communities" in advance of triggering; and 2) Post-ODF Natural Leaders becoming advocates to surrounding communities. This will be accomplished using radio dramas, street theater, and branded messaging.

Results

This intervention is in its early stages of implementation and showing excellent promise. The communities have responded positively and show an increased eagerness to achieve ODF status. Additionally, other CLTS implementers have expressed interest in adopting our communication executions for the communities that they work.

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Context

It is estimated that 67% of the rural population of Liberia openly defecates (JMP 2013). Despite years of highly subsidized and supply led sanitation interventions, open defecation only decreased from 69% in 1995 to 67% in 2011. In 2010, Global Communities (formerly CHF) and PSI, with the support of USAID, launched the Improved Water Sanitation and Hygiene (IWASH) project. One of the objectives of the IWASH project is to increase sanitation coverage in targeted geographical areas of rural Liberia through community led total sanitation (CLTS). The rate of uptake of CLTS has not been as fast in Liberia as in other countries in Sub Saharan Africa. Between 2011 and 2012 the success rate of communities achieving open defecation free (ODF) status was at 50%, taking approximately 4-6 months from triggering to ODF status.

The initiative

A team comprised of PSI, CHF, USAID, and the Government of Liberia came together to use the results of the market research to develop an overarching demand creation strategy for sanitation, complement “classic” CLTS with social marketing.

The first step in the marketing planning process was to review the qualitative consumer insights gathered by PSI to answer the key questions raised in the January 2013 stakeholder workshop. Study participants perceived the benefits of CLTS and ODF status to be improved health and prestige for their community. Respondents also believed that becoming an ODF community could attract future benefits such as development. Communities were primarily driven to attain ODF by the prospect of improved health, the ODF declaration celebration, and a positive perception of community from outsiders

On the other hand, community members also had negative perceptions of CLTS that stemmed from a lack of monetary benefits or provision of materials for latrine construction. In some communities households were driven to openly defecate because they perceived it as inconvenient to change their place of defecation and were satisfied with their current practice. Some households cited lack of latrine availability, knowledge around sanitation, and proper latrine maintenance as drivers. The lack of a social norm around latrine use and distance to town were also variables that were associated with open defecation.

The benefits of open defecation were that it fertilizes the soil and gives households an opportunity to observe changes in their feces. There was also a strong perception that open defecation represented a certain freedom.

Participants in the marketing planning workshop explored what factors community-led interventions were best placed to influence (social norms, risk perception) and what factors social marketing or other health promotion methods may be best placed to influence (subjective norms).

The IWASH marketing plan included a series of related activities that began shortly after the marketing planning workshop concluded in April 2013 and will continue through June 2014.

Key Insights: Two key insights from the interpretation of the audience research guided the development of the plan: 1) Achieving ODF status represents a step on the path to development for communities; 2) Natural Leaders could earn prestige by becoming CLTS ambassadors to neighboring communities.

Establish a Brand Identity: The first step in establishing a brand personality was designing a logo to be associated with *pupu-free* community status. This logo is used on the billboards that are placed in the verified ODF communities. The objective of the logo is for people to associate the symbol with cleanliness and, crucially, development.

Radio Dramas: Radio dramas were created to tell the story of the Mumusu Community and how they worked their way from being a community that practiced open defecation to a community that is ODF. The community also captures the story of Mulbah and explains how he served as a natural leader in his own community and went on to be an ODF Champion by going out to other communities and encouraging them to follow suit.

Street Theatre: To supplement the radio dramas there will also be a live street theatre performance. The street theatre will be used as a medium to create a buzz about CLTS in the communities and get more communities on board.

Billboards: Billboards have been developed that will be placed in local markets that are surrounded by non-ODF communities. The billboards were designed to reinforce the message that CLTS is the path to development and that communities must make a choice which path they wish to go down. The billboards reinforce the linkage between improving sanitation and development.

Success and Limitations

The marketing planning process was considered a success by the key stakeholder participants in that it provided an opportunity to bring together partners with varied and complementary expertise in sanitation to discuss and map out solutions. It also contributed to a national level dialogue on how social marketing can complement CLTS and the need to further explore and address supply side barriers for households.

Using social marketing to complement CLTS will increase sustainability, as the combination of social marketing and CLTS will reduce the resources required to create demand for ODF and draw lightly on the limited resources of the Government of Liberia. Once the project is concluded it is predicted that word of mouth and a robust natural leader network will keep the “buzz” going about CLTS and improving sanitation. Also, the National Technical Coordinating Unit, which has oversight of all CLTS activities in the country, has played an important role in the development of the marketing plan and has committed the Government of Liberia to continue to allocate resources to this cause once the IWASH project has phased out.

The Government of Liberia, through the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, has welcomed the approach and has participated fully in the process. Additionally, steps are being taken to include some of the social marketing processes into the National CLTS standard guidelines. Other organizations, such as UNICEF, have reached out to the IWASH team to share some of the models and materials that were developed for this intervention.

Preliminary Outcome Evidence

- Since SM of CLTS, in tandem with the activation of the natural leader network, the length of time for a community to go ODF has decreased from 4-6 months to 1 month
- Communities within the project districts have begun to request to be triggered; this is a new phenomenon in Liberia
- Communities outside the project catchment area have begun expressing interest in CLTS and achieving ODF status
- The success rate of triggered communities going ODF increased from 50% to 70% in a period of six months.

Lessons Learned and Way Forward

Although the intervention is still in its early stages, anecdotal evidence has suggested that “Classic CLTS” complimented with social marketing has the potential to increase the rates of uptake and ODF achievement throughout Liberia.

Government buy-in is critical to the success and sustainability of the intervention. PSI sits on the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare Health Promotion Unit and has made headway in explaining the promise and limitations of social marketing for sustainable expansion of access to hygienic sanitation. Moving forward, the Health Promotion Unit could play a more constructive, proactive role. After the first phase of implementation the next steps will be to evaluate the successes and lessons learned and work on improvements. Additionally, we would work along with the GoL to have them play a bigger role in the second phase of implementation by taking the lead with the IWASH team serving in a support role.

IWASH will continue to work with the GoL to incorporate social marketing of CLTS in the Liberian Guidelines for CLTS so that all CLTS implementers are have access to the tools and process that can increase success and impact.